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THE BEQUEST OF
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REV. DR. STONE'S SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE

Burning of the Steamer Lexington.

A

S E R M O N ,

OCCASIONED BY THE

BURNING OF THE STEAMER LEXINGTON.

PREACHED IN

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, BOSTON.

BY JOHN S. STONE, D. D.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY PERKINS & MARVIN.
1840.

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S E R M O N .

1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

BUT THIS I SAY, BRETHREN; THE TIME IS SHORT: IT REMAINETH, THAT BOTH THEY THAT HAVE WIVES, BE AS THOUGH THEY HAD NONE; AND THEY THAT WEEP, AS THOUGH THEY WEPT NOT; AND THEY THAT REJOICE, AS THOUGH THEY REJOICED NOT; AND THEY THAT BUY, AS THOUGH THEY POSSESSED NOT; AND THEY THAT USE THIS WORLD, AS NOT ABUSING IT: FOR THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY.

THESE words of the Apostle drew special force from the times in which they were written. Those were times of persecution and distress to the infant church; times which gave loud admonition to Christians against entangling themselves in the pleasures, the business, or even the domestic relations of life, and were powerful in persuading them to a right estimate and use of all earthly things. What the Apostle wrote, he wrote under the pressure of "*present distress*." The world had set itself against the church, and seemed determined to crush it in its very budding. Those Christians who married, and surrounded themselves with the tender clusters of domestic joy, were very sure to "*have trouble in the flesh*;" that is, to feel the sundering of their sacred ties under the sword of the persecutor, and all those aggravations which *suffering* draws from

the fact that its victim has involved in his own calamities the innocent and the loved. In like manner, the mourning and the rejoicing, the man of business and the retired man of wealth, so far as they were found among the disciples of Christ, were sure to realize, in those days of great tribulation, abundant reasons why they should entangle themselves as little as possible with what might bind them unduly to earth, or keep them without readiness for the uncertain hour of death.

I. Perhaps the force of the Apostle's language will best be brought out in a brief paraphrase.

“Now this I say, brethren, pursuing the argument which I have begun: the time which remains to each of us is short. We stand, every moment, amidst exposure to either death or a life of suffering. Every thing around us presses home the admonition, *‘that they who have wives be as though they had none;’* that they should bring the tenderest and strongest affections which the heart can cherish for a human being into thorough subordination to the love of God, and a longing after heaven; and that they should live in habitual readiness for a separation from those with whom they have linked their earthly destinies, and learned to live in holy union: *‘that they, too, who weep should be as though they wept not;’* that they should moderate their sorrows, and give them a chastened and subdued tone, by the reflection that those sorrows would soon terminate in a world where even the memory of them would

serve but to heighten the perfection of their unbroken joy: moreover, ‘that *they who rejoice should be as though they rejoiced not* ;’ that they should hold all the objects of their earthly joy in close connection with the ever living thought that the next moment might sweep those objects from their possession; and that, therefore, even their gladness should be tempered with *moderation*, and their very cheerfulness beam only in the lights of a *serious spirit*: still further, ‘that *they who buy should be as though they possessed not* ;’ that they should pursue their proper business with higher aims than those of mere gain; that they should not look for happiness in their acquisitions, but cultivate such a heavenly superiority to all mercenary views as to leave their deep peace and comfort of mind unbroken when the hand of change should come upon them, and place them side by side with the poorest of Christ’s followers: in short, ‘that *they who use this world should live as not abusing it* ;’ that, having their worldly fortunes already secured, they should use every thing with a view to good and right ends; that they should live, not in worldly show and pleasure, but in a spirit of heavenly charity, and in works of holy beneficence; and that they should maintain a state of constant and pleasing preparedness for the time when this whole world, and all that it contains for them, would be exchanged for one brighter, and better, and never to fade. To this course they were all admonished by the certain truth that, even though the sword of

persecution, or the hand of sudden change, were not at their doors, yet '*the fashion of this world itself passeth away*;' its whole form and dress, all its pomp and show, all its interests and pursuits, all its relations and affections, all its earthly joys and sorrows, are, as they affect each individual, transitory as a pageant that passes for a moment before the eye, and then vanishes for ever."

Such is the plain force of the Apostle's language in the text. He would not have Christian disciples insensible or indifferent to any of the proper feelings, or to any of the right pursuits of men; but he would have them *live* in the world, and *use* the world, as those who are soon to leave it, and as those who may reasonably hope for a glorious inheritance, and for immortal joys in God's heavenly kingdom.

II. And who does not see, my beloved hearers, that all this marks a course of conduct, and a habit of life, which do not depend, for their propriety or for their obligation, on the peculiar circumstances under which they were urged by the Apostle? Neither time of persecution, nor any other pressure of "*present distress*," creates the duty which was thus enjoined on the Corinthians. It is the duty of *all* Christians to live as the Apostle enjoined, at *all times*, and under *all circumstances*, as well as in times of blood, and amidst circumstances of tribulation. And the only reason for referring to such times and circumstances at all is, that they furnish

the Christian monitor with powerful means of impressing on the minds of his readers, or his hearers, some one or other of their permanent and universally binding duties. When days of disaster are falling on the church, or on society; when daily *facts* are teaching men that they hold all earthly things only by the *minute*; when the public mind has been *awakened* to this truth, and all hearts are palpitating with terror or with sensibility amidst its resistless demonstrations; then the teacher of Christian duty is presented with an opportunity for his work, full of the hopes of success. Those are times when the film of blindness to eternal things is taken from the eye of the mind; when the ear of the deaf soul is unstopped; when the heart of the unfeeling is touched; when the slumbers of the unthinking and careless are broken; when all, who have the least spark of spiritual sensibility, are awake, and attentive, and perhaps accessible; and when, therefore, truths which are ordinarily told without being heeded, and duties which are ordinarily urged without being felt, may find an open door to the heart, and be preached to the salvation of the soul. Times of special distress, then, do not create duty. They only make men more sensitively alive to it, and give the religious teacher more hope of success in its inculcation. There is no doubt, indeed, that such times as those in which the Apostle found himself, rendered some things inexpedient, which, in seasons of undisturbed tranquillity, are quite admissible, or even commendable; such as

contracting marriage,—a step which, however lawful, would then have been highly *unadvisable*; inasmuch as it could have had hardly any result other than that of needlessly involving the tender and the loved, whether in riper years or in infancy, in the misery with which a hostile world was pursuing the avowed followers of Jesus. Still, the scope of his language points not so much to cases like this, as to those of persons already engaged and settled in the various relations of life, and in the ordinary occupations of society; and in these cases, his language plainly shows that the times in which he wrote did not create the duties which he urged, but only furnished him with a strong occasion for urging them home on their serious and habitual observance. The time of *all* men in *this* world is *always* short, and may at any moment *terminate*, though they are with difficulty made to *realize* the truth; and the fashion of this world is with every individual passing away with equal fleetness, and vanishes in one age no more speedily than in another. It is therefore *always* the duty of those who would reasonably hope for solid and enduring glory in heaven, to live in the spirit of the Apostle's instructions; of 'those who have wives, to be as though they had none; of those who weep, to be as though they wept not; of those who rejoice, to be as though they rejoiced not; of those who buy, to be as though they possessed not; and of those who use this world, to live as not abusing it;' in a word, of *all*, to 'live as strangers and pilgrims upon

earth ;' 'looking for another and a better country, even an heavenly ;' and daily watching and waiting in a readiness to depart for its peaceful, its eternal shores ; with nothing to impede the travelling spirit on its way, and with nothing to disturb and weigh it down at the hour of its exit from time.

III. This duty, thus permanently and in all places binding on Christians, seems to me to find a powerful advocate in the incidents through which our community has been passing. In view of these incidents, I feel but little like preaching myself. Still I can hardly do less than allow such powerful though voiceless ministers of God to preach *through* me in the ears of those to whom they have been sent. May they find in those ears an open door to the hearts of all who listen.

The last five weeks have been weeks of sore distress to the inhabitants along this part of our New England coast. Thrice,* during that period, has the excited sea lashed our shores in its fury, and mingled melancholy death-moans with its sounding surges. Great numbers of our hardy seamen then found a wet and a frosty winding sheet, within sight perhaps of their own firesides, and left lowly, yet to them loved and sacred homes, to the sad inheritance of tears and penury.

Once, on mid ocean, has spontaneous fire burst forth from a ship† belonging to our own harbor, and

* The month of December, 1839, was remarkable for gales.

† Ship Harold, of Boston.

driven five human beings for refuge from its violence into the devouring depths. Of those five, two were citizens of Boston, and bound by close ties of blood to families in our own parish; families in which are now to be found hearts heavy with sorrow for *youth* cut off in the blooming of his promise, and for *manhood* mowed down on his return from toil, and from the gathering of his fruits.

And now, within our near and land-locked waters, both fire and frost, acting in stern league, have suddenly and at once buried an hundred and more of our fellow-creatures and our fellow-citizens in one watery, wintry grave!

The burning of the *steamer Lexington* on the night of Monday, the 13th of January, 1840, upon the waters of Long Island Sound, is an event which has overwhelmed many hearts with the bitterness of grief, and is engraven indelibly on the memory of many *other* hearts scarcely less afflicted than those of the bereaved themselves.

The company, gathered on that sad night aboard the ill-fated vessel, were of almost all classes, and from various and widely separated homes. There was the humble and toilful *laborer*; the active and enterprising *man of business*; the learned and accomplished *scholar and divine*; the young *be-trothed*, who had just left the beloved one amidst the joys of happy affection; the *husband*, returning to be greeted anew by the smiles and the welcome of wife and children; *tender woman*, uniting in herself the characters of daughter, wife, and mother,

and seeking, after years of separation, the presence and embrace of an affectionate and yearning father; *trusting childhood* and *helpless infancy*, following the steps of parents, and not dreaming that there *could* be danger within a *mother's* arms and on a *mother's* bosom; the *faithful and prayerful Christian*, ready at all times to commit himself "to the care of his covenant Shepherd;"* and perhaps the thoughtless follower of pleasure and the world, who never thought of dying till plunged amidst the agonies of death. All were travelling *in hope*, drawn by their various objects of interest or affection, and trusting with comfortable confidence to the means provided for their conveyance. The distance between themselves and their homes, or the objects which they sought, was lessening with every quickly passing moment; and hearts, and thoughts, and tongues were busy with beings or with interests left behind, and with beings or interests still before. Winter had darkened the skies into a chilly and inhospitable night, and made most grateful the speed with which they were borne onwards, and the safety which seemed to reign around them. How terrible at such a moment must have been the awful cry of alarm which broke their feeling of security, and told them that they were within the power of those fearfully opposed elements, *flame* and *flood*, *fire* and *frost*! And who can paint the agonies of that hour, when, as

* Extract from the last letter of JAMES G. BROWN, one of the sufferers.

the light of the burning vessel shone upwards toward heaven, as if to remind them once more of that only home where there are no night and no death, no sorrow and no sin, they were driven successively into the arms of the tossing waves, and all went down together to die in the cold, dark chambers of the deep !

The agonies and the sufferings of that hour, whatever they were, are now over. The *bodies* of the perished rest from pain. They feel not so much as the thrill which creeps through our frames at the thought of what they endured.

Meanwhile, their *spirits* have returned to God, who gave them, and are waiting the period of their final account with him. Their state is no longer, in any respect, a concern of ours. It is *wholly* in the hands of Him who is infinitely just and infinitely good.

One thing, however, in their case is still ours ; the melancholy catastrophe in which they have met their deaths. With *this* we have still a deep and a grave concern. This is one of those powerful though voiceless ministers of God of which I have spoken ; and which, with a sad willingness, I suffer to proclaim through my feeble speech the message which it has been commissioned to bring to your ears.

And what is that message ? It could not be embodied in more fitting words than those of the text : " This I say, brethren ; the time is short : it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as

though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing it : for the fashion of this world passeth away."

Was ever message more distinctly, more solemnly, more affectingly delivered than this by the mouth of that mute but meaning minister from Heaven ? And shall we not, dear hearers, obediently listen to its teaching ? It preaches just like the gospel itself ; and it preaches a plain and always binding duty. Christianity, indeed, does not seek to deaden one of the pure and tender sensibilities of our nature ; on the contrary, it seeks to quicken and refine them all. Nor does it interfere with any of the allowable enjoyments and pursuits of the present life ; on the contrary, it encourages and would exalt them, every one. Still, it does seek to bring our sensibilities under sanctified control, and under practical subordination to our love for God and to our regard for eternal things. And it does seek to bring the enjoyments and the pursuits of the present life into concordance with the will of God, and into subserviency to the welfare of the soul. It would not make the affection between husband and wife, or that between parents and children, less tender ; but only more holy. It would not have us love less truly, or less ardently ; but it *would* have us live in a more habitual readiness to be separated, at a moment's warning, from those whom we love ; and

it would have us love our *Saviour* better, and more fervently, than either father or mother, either wife or children; so that separation from these cannot reach disturbingly the main fountain of our happiness; our presence with Jesus more than outweighing our absence from them.

Again, it would not have us refrain from *weeping*, when there is *cause* to weep; for it is said, of the Saviour himself, "*Jesus wept*;" but it would have us weep as those who hope soon to be past the region of tears; as those who expect soon to become dwellers in a world of eternal joy. It would have our mournings, whatever their cause, subdued, and chastened, and full of the dawns of immortal consolations.

Nor would Christianity throw a chill over our earthly rejoicings, so long as they spring from the fountains of innocency in the heart, or are awakened by objects of worth in our lives; but it *would* have them the rejoicings of beings who look for better things than this world can furnish, and who know that they must quickly leave every thing that this world contains. It *would* have them the rejoicings of those who know the true value of things *temporal* and of things *eternal*; and who will never seek in the *former* for what can be found nowhere save in the *latter*.

Again, Christianity does not forbid us to buy and to possess; but it does forbid the sacrificing of our *souls* to gain; and it requires us both to buy and to possess only as stewards under God, and not as

original proprietors of what we may have. It does require us to subject all our acquisitions to the laws of stewardship; to use them to the glory of their Giver, and to hold them with a constant remembrance of the truths that we must soon yield them to others, and finally render an account of the use which we have made of them ourselves.

And, finally, Christianity does not prohibit the *use* of this world; on the contrary, it teaches that this world was *made* for our use. But then it *does* prohibit the *abuse* of this world; the turning of it *away* from its use, the *perverting* of it to wrong and evil purposes. To *use* the world, is to make it the means of good and of happiness to ourselves and to others, and the occasion of redounding glory to that God who has placed us here. To *abuse* the world is to consider it our portion and our home; to bury our thoughts and our affections amidst its vanities or its pursuits; and to suffer it to engross our souls, so that God, and heaven, and eternal life shall have nothing of them. *This* Christianity forbids; and there is mercy in its forbidding. This, the gospel threatens with everlasting penalties; and there is kindness—the kindness of infinite love—in its threatening. The gospel would not have man *destroy his soul* by an *abuse* of the world, or by either a false estimate or a wrong choice of the means of happiness. But it would have him make the world, and all it contains, the place and the means of his trial and his fitting for the salvation of his soul, and for the glories of life eternal.

And, beloved, will ye not suffer it to work for you this blessed result? Will you not give it its control over your lives, over your griefs, over your joys, over your acquisitions, and over your use of the world? Will you not suffer it, under the influences of that sacred One by whom it is inspired, to exalt you into a holy superiority to every thing beneath the heavens, and to raise you into a fitness for every thing that is above the heavens, even for that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand forevermore? If *now* your hearts are not loosened from the earth, when will they *ever* be? If *now* your souls are not liberated from their thralldom to pleasure or to gain, when will they *ever* find release? Who is preaching to you *now*? Not *man*, but *God*. See him in the light which to the eye of thought still gleams over yon darkly rolling waters. Hear him in the moans which to the ear of memory still sound from out those engulfing waves. Feel him in the sorrows which to the heart of sympathy are living all around you, in the sighs and in the tears of bereft companions and friends. Has all this happened without God? Let *human* agency hold the place in these things which properly belongs to it. Wo has indeed been wrought by human *means*. But God has put *his* voice into that wo, and in that voice is now talking to your souls. Awake and listen, I conjure you. Your *life*, the life of your *souls*, is in hazard. Christians, awake, and in holy earnest get ready for your departing. *Your* turn may come next. Men of the world, lovers of

pleasure, thoughtless youth, awake, lest death come upon you in your sinful sleep, and hurry you, un-
warned, to a reckoning for which you are not ready. Husbands, wives, mourners, rejoicers, buyers, users of the world, awake, and hear what God is saying, in *love*, as well as in chastening :—‘ Children, the time is short. Henceforth, let those who have wives, be as though they had none ; and those who weep, as though they wept not ; and those who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and those who buy, as though they possessed not ; and those who use this world, as not abusing it : for the fashion of this world passeth away.’

Holy Spirit, bless this preaching, for Jesus’ sake.
Amen.

NOTE.

THE Steamer Lexington left New York for Stonington on the afternoon of Monday, January 13, 1840, having a crew of about thirty-five persons, and about one hundred and ten or fifteen passengers, with a large quantity of cotton in bales on deck. At 7 o'clock, P. M. when about two miles from Eaton's Neck, the boat was discovered to be on fire; but whether originally from the wood work near the furnace below, or from the cotton on deck, remains unascertained. As soon as the first effort to extinguish the fire proved unsuccessful, the boat was headed for the shore; but the tiller ropes being burnt off in a few minutes, the boat became unmanageable, and soon afterwards the engine stopped. She was furnished with two quarter boats; but such was the panic which seized all minds, that these boats were hoisted out while the steamer was still under headway, and being crowded with passengers, were immediately swamped, and the passengers lost. A life boat also was on board; which was thrown over forward of the wheel, and lost. There was a fire engine on board, but it could not be worked. The unfortunate victims threw overboard bales of cotton, and other materials, with their baggage; some betook themselves to various modes of self-preservation; others broke open the kegs of specie, emptying the contents into the sea, that the kegs might be used to throw water on the flames. The night was intensely cold. The boat continued to burn till near three o'clock the next morning, when she went down. Of all the souls on board, four only were saved. The names of such of the passengers lost, as can be ascertained, are as follows:—

Mr. Isaac Davis, of	Boston.	Mrs. Russell Jarvis, with her	
Mr. Charles W. Woolsey,	do.	two children,	New York.
Mr. John Brown,	do.	Mr. Stephen Waterbury,	do.
Mr. James G. Brown,	do.	Mr. E. B. Patten,	do.
Mr. Abraham Howard,	do.	Mr. Patrick McKenna,	do.
Mr. Adolphus Harnden,	do.	Mr. Thomas James,	do.
Mr. ——— White,	do.	Mr. William Cowan,	do.
Mr. ——— Everett,	do.	Mr. George Baum,	do.
Capt. John Gorham Low,	do.	Capt. B. F. Foster, of	Providence, R. I.
Mr. Henry J. Finn,	do.	Mr. William A. Green,	do.
Mr. J. A. Leach,	do.	Mr. William Winslow,	do.
Mr. Nathaniel Hobart,	do.	Mr. John Winslow,	do.
Mr. H. C. Bradford,	do.	Mrs. H. A. Winslow,	do.
Mr. ——— Stuyvesant,	do. or N. York.	Mr. John Corey, of Foxborough,	Ms.
Mr. Charles Eberle,	do.	Mr. J. Porter Felt, Jr., of Salem,	Ms.
Mr. Benjamin D. Holmes,	do.	Capt. J. D. Carver, of Plymouth,	Ms.
Mr. William Dexter,	do.	Alphonso Mason, Esq., of Gloucester,	Ms.
Mr. T. H. M. Lyon,	do.	Mr. Jesse Comstock,	——
Mr. H. C. Craig, of	New York.	Mr. Robert Blake, of Wrentham,	Ms.
Mr. Charles Bracket,	do.	Mr. Samuel Henry, of Manchester,	Eng.
Mr. R. W. Dow,	do.	Mr. Charles H. Phelps, of Stonington,	Ct.
Mr. ——— Ballou, (or Bullard)	do.	Rev. Charles Follen, of Lexington,	Ms.
Mr. Charles S. Noyes,	do.	Mr. ——— Pierce, of Portland,	Ms.
Mr. Albert E. Harding,	do.	Capt. J. E. Kimball,	——

Mr. Royal T. Church, of Baltimore, Md.	Mr. James Walker, of Cambridge, Ms.
Mr. John W. Kerle, do.	Mr. John Gordon, do.
Mr. ——— Weston, do.	Mr. Wm. H. Wilson, of Williamsburg, N. Y.
Mr. ——— Walker, do.	Mr. Joshua Johnson, ———
Mr. Richard Picket, of Newburyport, Ms.	Mr. George Swan, of Columbus, O.
Capt. Theophilus Smith, of Dartmouth, Ms.	Mr. James Ray, of Kennebunk, Me.
Mr. John Hoyt, Mail Contractor.	Mr. John Martin, of Blackburne, Eng.
Mr. N. F. Dyer, of Pittsburgh, Pa.	Mr. Gilbert Martin, his son, do.
Mr. Charles Lee, of Barre, Ms.	Mr. David Green, of Minot, Me.
Mr. John Lemist, of Roxbury, Ms.	Mr. J. G. Davenport, of Middletown, N. J.
Mr. Jonathan Linfield, of Stoughton, Ms.	Miss Sophia T. Wheeler, of Greenfield, Ms.
Mr. Philo Upson, of Egremont, Ms.	Mrs. Mary Russell, of Stonington, Ct.
Mr. ——— Van Cott, of Stonington, Ct.	Mrs. Bates, wife of Mr. James Bates, of Bur-
Capt. ——— Mattison, ———	lington, N. J. with her two children.
Mr. Robert Williams, of Cold Spring, N. Y.	Mr. T. J. Partridge, of Barre, Ms. with his
Mr. David McFarlane, ———	wife, child, and sister's child.

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